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ABSTRACT

The noun phrase of the Norwegian dialect of the multilingual village of Skibotn, in northern Norway, is analyzed. Attention is focused on the possible influence of two other languages, Finnish, an imported language, and Sami, the original language of the area, in the development of three different clusters of features characteristic of nominal expressions at Skibotn. Substratum elements in the language spoken by people of both sexes and of different ages are examined, concentrating on the gender system and the use of definite versus indefinite forms of the noun. It is concluded that in a multilingual situation, even the majority language is subject to interference from minority and less prestigious languages, even when the speaker is a monolingual native speaker of the majority language. (MSE)

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The influence of multilingualism on a Northern Norwegian dialect.

The aim of this paper is to examine the noun phrase of the Norwegian dialect of the village of Skibotn in Northern Norway. For several hundred years the linguistic situation of this part of Norway has been one of multilingualism, the central languages in use being Sami, Finnish and Norwegian.

Skibotn is situated in the municipality of Storfjord, 130 kilometers from the town of Tromsø. The village is inhabited by about 500 people. To a certain extent it must be characterized as trilingual. The area was originally Sami. During the 19th century Finnish and Norwegian speaking people moved into the district. At that time Finnish immigrants came in great numbers to Northern Norway and formed their own communities in sparsely populated areas. At the beginning of the present century the linguistic situation of Skibotn was characterized by an extensive multilingualism, but at the same time a relative decline of Sami, the Sami population being assimilated into the Finnish-speaking one. The position of Finnish was strong, but Norwegian was increasingly used, more and more as time went by. The official policy of the Norwegian authorities was to implement assimilation on the Finnish and Sami speaking inhabitants. This has led to a development towards monolingualism in the area. Finnish is rapidly dying out as a mother tongue all over Northern Norway, despite a strong interest nowadays in preserving the language as a mother tongue in this part of the country. Today Finnish is mostly used by old people (particularly men), except for quite a few newly immigrated people from Finland.

Sami and Finnish are both Finno-Ugric languages. Since Norwegian is an Indo-European language, belonging to the Germanic branch, the linguistic differences between the three languages are extensive. Norwegian differs markedly from the other two in grammatical structure. Sami and Finnish however exhibit many structural similarities. Relevant features of the noun phrase worth mentioning in this connection are:

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1. The three Indo-European genders of masculine, feminine and neuter are distinguished in all Norwegian speech except for certain urban dialects which have coalesced the first two. Finnish and Sami lack grammatical gender.

2. In Norwegian gender may be regarded as a quality attributed to each noun which determines the choice among alternative forms of accompanying articles, adjectives and pronouns of reference. This means that Norwegian has different articles for each of the three genders. Sami and Finnish have no articles.

3. Norwegian dialects distinguish between weak and strong forms of the noun by means of a suffix in the weak forms. This suffix is always an unstressed vowel, which in some dialects may be deleted. In Skibotn this vowel is -e. When I call the terminal vowel of weak nouns a suffix, I'm speaking diachronically. This terminal unstressed vowel is a remnant of an Old Germanic stem suffix. Today there is only a slight formal difference in the indefinite singular form between weak and strong nouns in most Norwegian dialects.

In the analysis of the Skibotn dialect I'll deal with the gender system, the rest of the old stem system of nouns and the use of definite versus indefinite forms.

The hypothesis behind this analysis is as follows: It is to be expected that a language in use in a multilingual society should be influenced in some way or another by its multilingual surroundings. This means that it may be suitable for my purpose to analyse the Norwegian dialect at Skibotn in view of the fact that this dialect has developed in a society where Sami or Finnish have been, and to a certain extent still are - the mother tongues of a great many people. The reason for concentrating on the noun phrase is that it probably exhibits features which differ from other Northern Norwegian dialects being developed in monolingual societies.

As already mentioned Sami and Finnish lack grammatical gender,

except for certain pronouns of reference. In Standard Finnish the pronoun hän refers to persons, both masculine and feminine, se refers to animals and inanimates. In Northern Finnish dialects however hän is not used, se covering all functions of reference. The Finnish spoken at Skibotn has much in common with Northern dialects in Finland, among other things this system of reference. Hän is used more in Skibotn than in Northern Finland though, probably because of influence from Norwegian. The written language of Northern Sami has a pronoun system corresponding to that of Standard Finnish; the pronoun son refers to persons, dat to animals and inanimates. In some Sami dialects as in some Finnish dialects, the pronoun referring to animals and inanimates has replaced the pronoun for persons. As I have already pointed out Finnish and Sami lack articles. This means that these languages do not have morphological means to express the differences between definite and indefinite forms in the same way as Norwegian.

Gender

An idealized noun paradigm for the Norwegian dialect of the northern part of the county of Troms you'll find in the handout, Table 1:

	SINGULAR		PLURAL		Example
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	
	en - Ø	n	a	an	båt - boat
m	en - Ø	n	a	an	bekk - brook
	en - Ø	- n	-a	-an	bakke - hill
	en - Ø	a		n	bru - bridge
f	(seldom ei -Ø)				
	en - Ø	-a		- n	veske - bag
	en - Ø	a		n	elv - river
	et - Ø		Ø	an	hus - house
n	et - Ø	-	-a	-an	øye - eye

('-' indicates deletion in the stem)

As the paradigm shows the feminine indefinite singular article ei which is a specific feminine gender marker in other Northern Norwegian dialects (and southern dialects as well), has almost completely been replaced by the masculine en at Skibotn. Thus en has become a "common" gender marker of the indefinite form singular. In the same way the possessive pronouns min, din, sin, which are the masculine variants, replace the specific feminine markers mi, di, si, and the masculine adjectives liten and egen replace the feminine forms lita and eiga, as you see in table 2:

Table 2:

m.	min	din	sin	"common" gender min din sin
f.	mi	di	si	
m	liten	egen (eigen)		"common" gender liten egen
f.	lita	eiga		

Example

en liten jente (f.) has replaced
ei lita jente (a small girl)
min egen jente (f.) has replaced
mi eiga jente (my own girl)

(Normal orthography is used)

This levelling tendency at Skibotn may be explained as a result of the multilingual situation in the village.

Except for the indefinite article in the singular and certain adjectives the difference between masculine and feminine gender is maintained in the dialect, always in the definite form singular, and also in the plural. However, especially young people seem to accept -a and -an as plural markers in feminine words, analogous to the masculine and neuter. Plural forms as veskan (the bags), bøttan (the buckets), øksan (the axes) are accepted, but seldom used, by young people, but not by older people. It is tempting to prophesy that a development towards complete analogy in the plural is in progress, especially because this development has reached a further stage in other Norwegian dialects in multilingual districts in Northern Norway. An idealized pattern of a

gradual transition from feminine into "common" gender is shown in table 3.

More interesting, though, is a rather high degree of vacillation in the assignment of gender, even among nouns which are quite frequent. To persons from outside this is perhaps the most stiking feature of the dialect at Skibotn and in other multilingual areas in Northern Norway. This tendency to vacillate between different genders is strongly stigmatized socially and the native speakers themselves characterize their own speech as "wrong", "ungrammatical" and the like.

Examples of gender-vacillating nominal expressions (table 4):

en område in stead of et område (an area)
en skille " " " et skille (a distinction)
et del " " " en del (a part)
en kart " " " et kart (a map)
på galt side " " på gal side (on the wrong side)
den gamle posthuse in stead of det gamle posthuse (the old postoffice)

In the last example the article den is masculine, the suffixed article -e in posthuse is neuter.

This kind of vacillation is to be found both in nexus- and junction-connections. It applies to articles, adjectives and pronouns, pronouns both in attributive and anaphoric use.

The tendency to mark an attributive word by another gender than the gender of the noun to which the attribute is attached, is greater when there is one or more words between the attribute and the noun than in cases where the noun and the attribute are directly linked to each other. Constructions of the type den (m) kvite huse (n) (the white house) are more frequent than those corresponding to den (m) huse (n), (the house) though the last ones are by no means completely missing in the data, as the examples of table 4 show.

In cases where vacillation of gender occurs, when a gender is "incorrectly" assigned to a noun or its attributes, one should

expect the masculine to dominate, simply because the masculine is the most prominent gender in Norwegian. This was exactly what Einar Haugen found in his investigation of the assignment of gender to English nouns that were borrowed into American Norwegian. The results of his investigation are presented in the very interesting section on "The Grammar of Loanwords" in Haugen 1969:440-449. In running text from the time of peak emigration from Norway to the United States, Norwegian had approximately 45 percent masculine nouns, 25 percent feminine nouns and 30 percent neuter nouns. Haugen found that the probability that new forms would become masculine was much greater than the frequency of masculine nouns in running texts. Among the English loanwords in Norwegian an entire 88 percent of them were assigned masculine gender, 2 percent feminine and 10 percent neuter.

The same tendency is not found at Skibotn. Except for a rather strong tendency to use the "common" gender article en in front of neuter nouns, neuter instead of masculine or feminine is as usual as the opposite: masculine or rather "common" gender for neuter. On the other hand, the feminine pattern seems to be rather weak. The data are unfortunately too scant for me to show any statistical conclusions. I have tried to systematize all the examples where gender vacillates in different ways, hoping to find a pattern behind the vacillation. This I have not been able to; there seems to be no structural aspects determining which gender a noun is to be assigned. The best way to explain this frequent vacillation of gender is to analyse it in connection with the multilingualism of the village.

The articles ei(n)/en(ei) - eit/et are in Norwegian markers of indefinite versus definite form, singular versus plural, not-neuter versus neuter gender. In the same way the articles den-/det and the suffixed articles -en, -a, -et may be analysed. Compared to other Norwegian dialects the marking of gender seems to be weak at Skibotn. Some informants seem to abolish gender as a relevant grammatical category altogether. Thus the articles en and et may be considered allomorphs of a morpheme which only marks indefinite form singular, and not gender. In the same way den and det are allomorphic markers of definite form singular only. It is uncertain if these allomorphs are distributed

according to a certain pattern. Inter- and intraindividual variation being strikingly great, the distribution of the morphs seems to be arbitrary.

In most Norwegian dialects the possessive pronouns is placed after the noun, mor mi = my mother. The expression min mor is only possible in formal style in most Norwegian, mi mor is rather unusual, and mor min, with a "common" gender possessive pronoun after a feminine noun, is ungrammatical. At Skibotn min mor is a frequent as mor min. And furthermore, there is no stylistic difference between a nominal construction with the possessive in front of the noun and a construction with the possessive behind the noun. In other places is Norway this is very uncommon or just impossible. At Skibotn the tendency to place the possessive in front of the noun may be due to interference from Finnish, where the front position is the only possible place for a possessive pronoun.

Referring anaphorically to feminine and masculine nouns by pronouns most informants at Skibotn use the indefinite pronoun den, and not the personal pronouns han and ho, which is the normal way in Norwegian. At Skibotn the use of han and ho is mostly motivated by sex, not by grammatical gender. Nevertheless anaphoric gender congruence is not unknown in the village, only rarely used.

The conclusion of this part of my paper must be that among grown-up and old people at Skibotn the Norwegian gender system is going through a process of dissolution. If the linguistic development had been "free", i.e. without any influence from outside and without normative influence from mother tongue teaching in schools, further development might have taken this direction. But the strong normative influence from school and society of to-day's civilisation prevents a development according to the linguistic tendencies described above. Some of the informants were confronted with some examples of vacillation of gender. It is symptomatic of the situation that old persons accepted several of the examples as grammatical while the youngest one, an eleven year old girl, would not accept any of them.

Weak/strong nouns

In modern Norwegian the difference of weak and strong nouns is manifested by the ending of the indefinite form singular of the noun, the weak nouns ending in an unstressed syllable consisting of one vowel, which at Skibotn is -e (or schwa) the strong forms ending in a consonant or a stressed vowel. In Old Norse quite a few nouns could have both a strong and a weak form, like holmr or holmi (small island). At Skibotn unexpectedly many nouns may have both a strong and a weak form, in the data some of them are vacillating intraindividually, and some interindividually. These parallel forms have been noticed (in normal orthography):

brakk - brakke (barracks)
bu - bue (bow)
bukt - bukte (bay)
dam - damme (pond)
elv - elve (river)
gjeng - gjenge (gang)
gjerd - gjerde (fence)
grop - grope (hollow)
holm - holme (holm, islet)
gjot - gjote (a hollow in the ground filled with water)
legde - (but not legd, which is the normal Norwegian form)
(the first part of a hill)
myr - myre (bog, marsh)
skjå - skjåe (shed)
slått - slåtte (haymaking)
sumpe - (but not sump which is the normal form elsewhere) (swamp)
søkk - søkke (hollow)
tjæremil - tjæremile (charcoal kiln)

This list shows that originally strong nouns more easily become weak than the opposite. A thorough synchronic analysis of the language at Skibotn would probably conclude that the old system of stem inflection is completely abolished, but in another way than in other areas in which the same thing has happened, but where the ending of the indefinite form singular is stable. In the plural there is nothing left of the old system. This the

Skibotn dialect shares with quite a few other Norwegian varieties. But the Skibotn dialect does not distinguish between the two tonemes as most other Norwegian dialects do, and as we have seen, the indefinite form in singular vary quite a lot. This is an extreme case, this strong vacillation is not described in any other Norwegian dialect. So why is it to be found here? A tentatiave answer may be found by comparing with the nominal system of Finnish and Sami. In both these langauges there is a strong tendency to let uninflected forms in singular end in a vowel. Consonant endings are only possible when the consonant is dental or alveolar. Loanwords tend to be given vocalic endings, in Finnish -i, in Sami -a. Thus bank is pankki in Finnish, horse is heasta in Sami, borrowed from Norwegian hest. Once again we can explain deviating features in the dialect as a result of interference from Sami and Finnish; these features may be looked upon as substratum elements.

Definite/indefinite forms

Finnish and Sami lack articles and express what is expressed through the use of definite and indefinite articles by other means, i.e. through case forms and word order. In Norwegian the indefinite article introduces a new and till now unknown referent to the context. In such cases the dialect at Skibotn tend to omit the article.

Examples:
der er voll in stead of en voll
(there is (an) earthwor/a bank of earth)
altså er det jo høy mel, den er nokså høy in stead of en høy mel
(it is (a) tall earthwork, it is rather tall)
no spørs det om det er norsk, samisk eller finsk navn in stead of et norsk...
(the question is whether it is (a) Norwegian, Sami or Finnish name)
han er gammel mann in stead of en gammel mann
(he is (an) old man)

In examples like these the article seems to be redundant; it may be facultatively deleted, that is: the article is facultative

when new information is introduced. This is not the case in other Norwegian dialects.

In the same way the front definite article may be deleted:
I seinare tida in stead of i den seinare tida
(in(the)latest time)

On the other hand Norwegian speaking people at Skibotn tend to use determinative or demonstrative pronouns when there is no function of determination in the sentence spoken, as when an informant referred to old times when there used to be a fair in the village every autumn, in this way:

når det var den(m) høstmarkedet (n)
(when there was the fair at autumn)
The normal Norwegian way of putting it, is:
når det var høstmarked.

Another example:
dem glemme heile den finsken in stead of ...heile finsken
(they forget the whole Finnish language)
(whole - the- Finnish)
Particularly striking it is to refer to one's own grandfather in this way:
den derre bestefaren
(this there grandfather)

Examples of deleted suffixed article:
de to bestemødre in stead of de to bestemødrene
(the two grandmothers)
det (n) strek (m) in stead of den streken
(this line)
var i parti (nazipartiet) in stead of ...i partiet
(belonged to (the) party)

In a village in the neighbourhood Nesheim has observed that "The lack of a definite article in Sami results in uncertainty as how to use it in Norwegian" (Nesheim 1952:127, my translation). He is especially interested in an observed tendency to use a definite article in cases where an attribute is connected with a

noun, even when this attribute is the indefinite article, thus resulting in pleonasm. Nesheim quotes these examples:

Kor mine tøflan e? in stead of ...mine tøfla...
(Where are my slippers?)
Kem du e sin småguten? " " ...sin smågut...
(Whose little boy are you?)
Ikke va ho nån pen damen heller in stead of ...nån pen dame..
(Neither was she a nice lady)
en gammel nordlandsbåten " " " ...nordlandsbåt
(an old nordlandsboat-the)
Du er bare en bukken " " " ...bukk
(you are only a he-goat-the (=a clumsy fool))
Før dør fattigmanns einaste kua, før ho dør in stead of ..einaste ku.
(The only cow of the poor man will die, before she dies)

Lorentz (1982:142) says that expressions like en gammel nordlandsbåten is no longer to be heard in the district where Nesheim did his field work in the fifties. At Skibotn however expressions of this kind are not infrequent:

en knausen (a rock-the)
en liten knausen (a small rock-the)
en holmen (an islet-the)

As is easily seen, the distinction between definite and indefinite form is abolished in these cases. In addition there are in the data some examples of double definite form being used after a front possessive pronoun, a construction which is ungrammatical in Norwegian elsewhere:

lenge før mine dagan in stead of ...mine daga
(a long time before my days-the)
våres jenta snakke norsk in stead of ...våres jente
(our girl-the speaks Norwegian)

Expressins like these may be explained as the result of a hypergeneralization of a rule about the use of double definite form in Norwegian. This hypergeneralization is heavily stigmatized socially outside the multilingual societies, and inside as well.

That is probably the reason why constructions with this pattern are rather rare. They are however more frequent in place names than in other nominal expressions.

Conclusions

In this paper I have considered three different clusters of features characteristic of nominal expressions at Skibotn, which deviate from the Norwegian language in the monolingual vicinity. To explain why these features have come into being I have pointed to a potential influence from Finnish or Sami, direct or indirect. It may be of interest to note that exactly the same features are found in the Swedish language in Tornedalen in Northern Sweden, and some of them also in Fenno-Swede in Finland (Pinomaa 1974).

In Norway Norwegian is the majority language and Sami and Finnish are minority languages. Thus Norwegian has been looked upon mostly as a lender to Sami and Finnish and not at all as a borrower from these two languages. In fact there are very few Sami and Finnish loanwords in Norwegian; in this way it is right to say that Norwegian is not influenced by these two languages. But as we have seen, in multilingual surroundings even the majority language, which at the same time is the prestigious language, seems to be subjected to interference from minority and less prestigious languages, even when it is the mother tongue of the speaker, and even if the speaker is monolingnal, but grown up in a multilingual society.

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Table 1.

	SINGULAR		PLURAL		Example
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	
m	en - Ø	n	a	an	båt - boat
	en - Ø	n	a	an	bekk - brook
	en - Ø	-ən	-a	-an	bakke - hill
f	en - Ø	a	ə	ən	bru - bridge
	(seldom ei -Ø)				
	en - Ø	-a	-ə	-ən	veske - bag
	en - Ø	a	ə	ən	elv - river
n	et - Ø	?	Ø	an	hus - house
	et - Ø	-ə	-a	-an	øye - eye

('-' indicates deletion in the stem)

Table 2.

m	min	din	sin	"common" gender min din sin
f	mi	di	si	

m	liten	eigen/egen	"common" gender liten egen
f	lita	eiga	

Examples

en liten jente (f or "common" gender) has replaced
ei lita jente (f) - a small girl
min egen jente (f or "common" gender) has replaced
mi eiga jente (f) - my own girl

Table 3.

Transition from femininine gender to "common gender" :

Original Northern Norwegian feminine paradigm:

ei brʉ:	brʉ:a	brʉ:ə	brʉ:ən	(bridge)
ei bøt:ə/ɑ	bøt:a	bøt:ə	bøt:ən	(bucket)

Stage 1 of transition:

en	brʉ	brʉ:a	brʉ:ə	brʉ:ən
en	bøt:ə	bøt:a	bøt:ə	bøt:ən

Stage 2:

en	brʉ:	brʉ:a	brʉ:a	brʉ:an (analogy from m in plural)
en	bøt:ə	bøt:a	bøt:a	bøt:an

Stage 3:

en	brʉ:	*brʉ: n	brʉ:a	brʉ:an
en	bøt:ə	*bøt: n	bøt:a	bøt:an

Stage 3 is completely analogous with masculine. No Northern Norwegian dialect has reached this stage as yet. Several have stopped at stage 2. The dialect of Skibotn is at the moment at stage 1.

Table 4.

Examples of gender-vacillated nominal expressions:

en (m) område (n)	in stead of	et(n) område (an area)
en (m) skille (n)	" " "	et(n) skille (a distinction)
et (n) del (m)	" " "	en (m) del (a part)
en (m) kart (n)	" " "	et (n) kart (a map)
på galt (n) side (f)	" " "	på gal (m/f) side (f)(on the wrong side)
den (m) gamle posthuse (n)	" "	det (n) gamle posthuse (n) (the old postoffice)

Weak/strong nouns.

brakk - brakke (barracks)
bu - bue (bow)
bukt - bukte (bay)
dam - damme (pond)
elv - elve (river)
gjeng - gjenge (gang)
gjerd - gjerde (fence)
grop - grope (hollow)
holm - holme (holm, islet)
gjot - gjote (a hollow in the ground filled with water)
legde (but not legd, which is the normal Norwegian form) (the first part of a hill
myr - myre (bog, march)
skjå - skjåe (shed)
slått - slåtte (haymaking)
sumpe (but not sump which is the normal form elsewhere) (swamp)
søkk - søkke (hollow)
tjæremil - tjæremile (charcoal kiln)

Articles

Deletion of the indefinite article:

der er voll (not: en voll) (there is an earthwork/bank of earth)
altså er det jo høy mel, den er nokså høy (not: en høy mel)
(it is a tall earthwork, it is rather tall)
no spørs det om det er norsk, samisk eller finsk navn (not: et norsk..)
(the question is whether it is a Norwegian, Sami or Finnish name)
han er gammel mann (not: en gammel) (he is an old man)

Deletion of the front definite article:

i seinare tida (not: den seinare tida) (in the latest time)

Superfluous (?) use of article (or pronoun):
når det var den høstmarkedet
dem glemme heile den finsken
den derre bestefaren

Deleted suffixed article:
de to bestemødre
den strek
var i parti

Examples of pleonastic use of the definite article according to Nesheim (1952):

Kór mine tøflan e?
Kem du e sin småguten?
Ikke va ho nån pen damen heller?
En gammel nordlandsbåten.
Du er bære en bukken.
Før dør fattigmanns einaste kua, før ho dør.

Examples from Skibotn:

en knausen
en liten knausen
en holmen

lenge før mine dagan
våres jenta snakke norsk

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